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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

1 June 1951

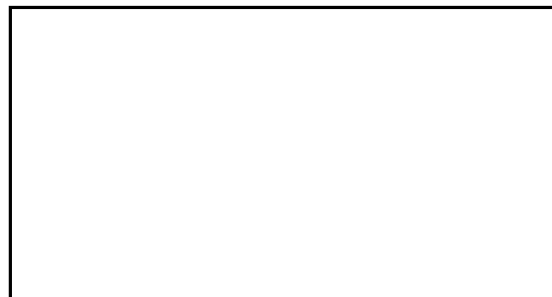
Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence

Subject: Afghan-Pakistan Tension

Tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan has recently increased as a result of troop concentrations near the frontier northwest of Quetta. The Afghan Government, claiming that Pakistan had concentrated its forces across the frontier, recently mobilized three reserve divisions in the area and was reported to be considering full mobilization. The Pakistan Government, while admitting a recent redistribution of its army and air units in the frontier region, denied that its frontier forces had been strengthened. Although Pakistan's denial is probably not wholly accurate, Pakistan has taken no action which would justify the extravagant counter-measures adopted by Afghanistan. The Afghan Government has belatedly proposed a simultaneous withdrawal of Afghan and Pakistan forces from the frontier, but the Pakistan Government will reportedly refuse to consider this proposal unless Afghanistan adopts effective measures to prevent further raids across the frontier by Afghan tribesmen.

There is little doubt that Afghanistan is primarily responsible for the current tension. Ever since the partition of India in 1947, Afghanistan has demanded autonomy for the tribesmen in Pakistan's northwest frontier area, who are ethnically related to the dominant tribal group in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government has directed

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a strong propaganda campaign against Pakistan to that end, and cross-frontier raiding by Afghan tribesmen has been primarily responsible for the sporadic frontier incidents between the two countries. A series of such incidents during the past month has formed the background to the current troop concentrations and heightened tension. While Pakistan is unalterably opposed even to discussing the "Pushtoonistan" issue, it has acted with considerable restraint in the face of Afghan provocations.

It is difficult to estimate what Afghanistan expects to gain by its recent bellicose attitude, particularly in view of the fact (of which the Afghan Government must be aware) that the Afghan forces would be badly mauled in any clash with Pakistan forces. Prince Daud, the present Afghan Minister of War, Interior, and Tribal Affairs, is believed to be largely responsible for the recent more provocative actions of the Afghan Government and is suspected of attempting to precipitate a crisis in Afghan-Pakistan relations as a devious means of increasing his own power. There is even some suspicion that, in the absence in the US of the Prime Minister, Daud, who is known to be ambitious and scheming, may be planning a military coup. However, the southeastern Afghan tribes, upon whose loyalty the authority of any Afghan Government ultimately depends, are reportedly unenthusiastic at the prospect of becoming involved in hostilities with Pakistan.

Another explanation of Afghanistan's current attitude toward Pakistan is that it is attempting to synchronize its own with India's policy toward Pakistan. According to this hypothesis, Afghan propaganda, frontier raids, and troop concentrations have been designed to distract Pakistan from, or at least blunt its reaction to, recent Indian moves to consolidate Indian control over Kashmir. Although there is no direct evidence of such Afghan-Indian collusion, an analysis of the timing of Afghan and Indian activities in regard to "Pushtoonistan" and Kashmir, respectively, suggests that such collusion does in fact exist.

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The current Afghan-Pakistan tension emphasizes the insecurity of Pakistan's position and suggests that, if Pakistan and India got into a war over Kashmir, Pakistan would probably be faced with an additional enemy on its northwestern flank. However, as Afghanistan would probably not dare take on Pakistan singlehandedly, serious hostilities between the two countries appear unlikely at this time.

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